DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 157 270 EC 111 755

AUTHOR Befring, Edward
TITLE Personnel Preparation for Special Education in Norway. An International Comparison.
PUB DATE Jun 78
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the World Congress on Future Special Education (First, Stirling, Scotland, June 25 - July 1, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Foreign Countries; *Handicapped Children; Higher Education; Post Secondary Education; Program Descriptions; *Special Education Teachers; *Teacher Education
IDENTIFIERS *Norway

ABSTRACT

Described is the basic structure of the Postgraduate Teacher Training Center of Special Education in Norway. Among areas considered are admission qualifications, subjects covered in the training program, the five specialization courses, and practical educational problems and principles. (SBH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

#16
154
ED157270

PERSONNEL PREPARATION FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION IN NORWAY, AN INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON

by

Edvard Befring

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Principal, Advanced College of Special Education
Granasen 4
N-1347 Hosle, Norway

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

C.E.C.

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

Prepared upon invitation
to First World Congress on
Future Special Education

University of Sterling - Scotland
June 25 - July 1, 1978

©

EC111755

INTRODUCTION

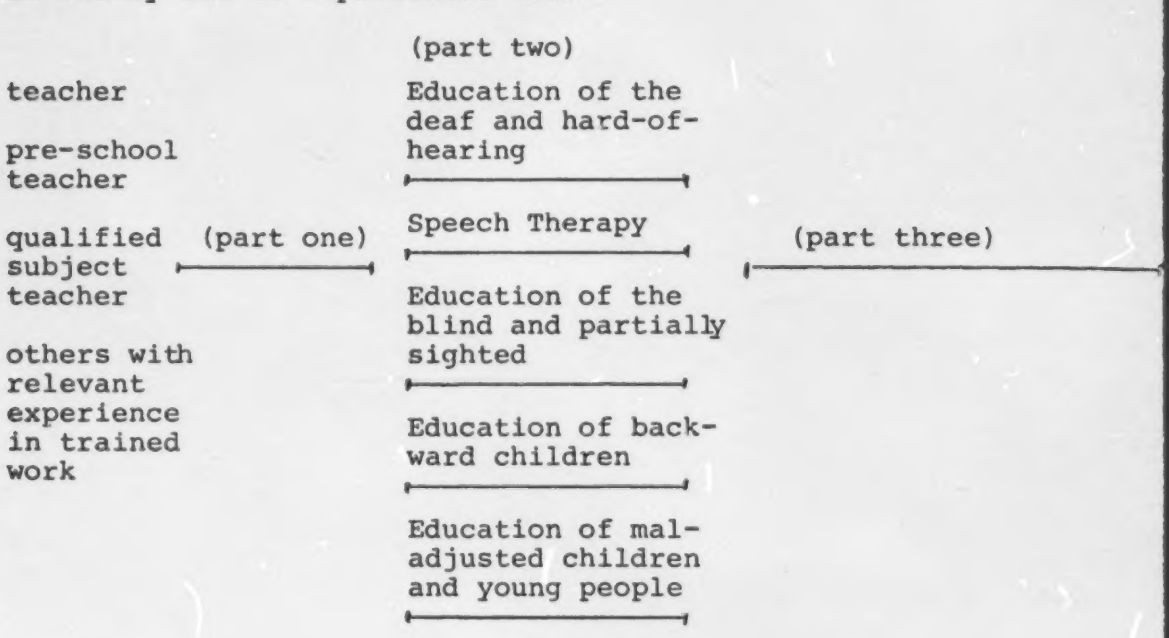
Since 1961 in Norway there has existed a solid system in preparating teachers for special education. In that year The Postgraduate Teacher Training Center of Special Education +) was established, thereby coordinating the activities and giving the possibility for expanding skilled special education based upon research and practical experience. The possibilities for post-graduate education that had existed previously can almost be called sporadical, although there existed the possibilities to take different courses lasting one year or less in most of the areas in special education. These educational possibilities were not sufficient neither in terms of quality nor quantity. The Norwegian schools had a difficult task to accomplish, the main aim being to provide the possibility of a real education for all children and youths, an important step towards this (aim) had to be to raise the standard of special education amongst the greatest possible number of the schools teachers.

THE BASIC STRUCTURE OF THE NORWEGIAN SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The creation of the Postgraduate Teacher Training Center +) of Special Education in 1961 gave teachers the possibility of a two year post-graduate education course, the first year (part one) being the same for everyone, whilst the second year (part two) was divided into five specialized courses. About ten years later serious work began in the development of a further period of study and research (part three) at a level approaching that of a Ph.D. This course was started in 1976 at The Postgraduate Teacher Training Center of Special Education and consists of a two-year fulltime course based on the part two.

+) Now: The Advanced College of Special Education

The basic structure for the postgraduate special education in Norway can be represented thus:



Let me give you a little more information:

ADMISSION QUALIFICATIONS

It is an entry requirement to the part one that one has been on a recognized teacher training course and preferably has experience as a teacher. The majority of those who begin on the first part have either education as a general teacher or a pre-school teacher. However, a rising number have either education as a qualified subject teacher or a degree from a university. In a few "special cases" applicants with a background in physio-therapy, working-therapy or similar experience have also been accepted.

PART ONE

The aim of the part one study is to give them the most possible allround introduction in the different areas and problems in special education. The course is thus built upon the so-called "omnibus-principle"". About 2/3rd of the theoretical part of the course is common for all, whilst 1/3rd can be chosen either with regards to education/ practical background (i.e. pre-school teacher, general

teacher, qualified subject teacher) or because of special interests.

The subjects that are dealt with can briefly be mentioned thus:

- psychology of children and young people
- learning handicaps (subject problems in school, including reading and reading difficulties, speech and language difficulties, mathematics and arithmetic difficulties).
- emotional and social problems, social psychology and psychiatry.
- physical and mental handicaps (deficiencies of hearing, sight and psychological development, general learning and problems of a motor-physical nature).
- the organizational and the economic framework of special education. This includes advising about educational psychology, sparetime and cultural activities and social political activities for children and young people. Also theories of methods of testing, research methods and educatinal statistics.
- special education in relation to different types of schools (pre-schools, primary school, secondary school and further education etc.)
- special education involving subjects that have to do with creativity (such as children's literature, gymnastic, puppet theatre, arts and crafts, drama, music, movement and play).

The practical part of the part one includes special educational work, done under supervision, which takes 6 weeks in all. This part of the course is divided into 3 week periods in each term. These take place at different schools, institutions, advisory clinics etc.
The Advanced College of Special Education employs supervisory teachers for one year at a time, and they are paid a certain fee by the hour.

Part one gives a general training in special education.

At the moment The Advanced College of Special Education educates aprox. 100 (part one) students each year, and further 100 part time students (teachers that study in their spare-time and holidays). The Advanced College of Special Education has the responsibility for decentralizing the educational activities.

It should be mentioned that in the course of the last ten years the part one courses have been very much decentralized and can therefore be taken at Teacher Training Colleges and other educational institutions in Norway. All in all we can speak about a special education "offensive" that has led to a mobilization of both knowledge and attitudes and this makes up an important preparation in connection with the new moves towards integration laid down by the Norwegian School legislation from the middle of the 1970's.

PART TWO

As mentioned, part two is based upon the principle of specialization. I will now briefly mention what is included in the five ordinary specialization courses:

EDUCATION OF THE DEAF AND HARD-OF-HEARING

This gives training for diagnostics/treatment/education of the deaf and hard of hearing of all ages. This course can take about 20 students a year.

SPEECH THERAPY gives training in the areas of language, voice and articulation problems (aphasic - dysphatic). The department can take about 55 students yearly including 15 who have decentralized training (in Bergen).

EDUCATION OF BACKWARD CHILDREN

This covers a very important area in connection with the school legislation which has placed the educationally subnormal under the responsibility of the Educational system. The course can take about 55 students a year including 20 who have decentralized training (in Trondheim).

EDUCATION OF THE BLIND AND THE PARTIALLY SIGHTED

This course gives a training for special educational diagnostics/treatment/teaching of the blind and the partially sighted of all ages. The department offers about 15 places yearly.

EDUCATION OF MALADJUSTED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

This gives training for special educational work including counselling in all types of schools. This course can take about 50 a year, including 15 who have decentralized training (at Lillehammer).

For students with special background and special training requirement there are arranged so-called "personal courses". Work has further more begun upon another training course for special educational workers dealing with the deaf-blind and others who are severely multiply handicapped.

The practical work in part two consists of 8 weeks under supervision, this is divided into two four-week periods each term. This practice takes place throughout the country at special institutions with resident counsellors.

PART THREE

Part three, which was started in 1976, is a full time two-year course and aims to give students an advanced allround academic and scientific bases for, and a greater practical insight into special educational work. The first Ph.D.-students of Special education in Norway have thus recently completed their studies. So far I know these are the first Ph.D.-students of their kind in Northern Europe. The course aims to give academic/ scientific educational training to the same degree as for instance the medicine and psychology courses at the established universities.

At the same time trying to protect the close connection it has the practical educational problems that have always

been part of the special educational post-graduate arrangements.

In the first term of this course one tries to give both a relevant insight into the areas dealt with in special education and a certain amount about research methods, strategy and statistics. This is to enable the students to carry out a special educational research project.

The greatest part of the students time in the second and third term is used to work upon research projects they have chosen themselves. There are also during this period courses which go deeper into special educational diagnostic work and counselling.

In the fourth and final term the students consentrate upon widening their practical and theoretical horizons and prepare themselves for the work that awaits them after the final Ph.D.-exam.

The vocational aim for part three students is that they shall be capable of working in those areas of society where a high level of insight into special education is required. In other words lecturing posts in teacher training establishments, leading positions in counselling and observation posts, projects to do with diagnostic work, teaching/training and treatment of different groups of hand capped children and elderly people, and finally positions within special educational experimental projects and research etc.

Since 1976 The Advanced College of Special Education has accepted 30 part three students each year and has thus a total of 60 part three students engaged there at any time.

In connection with the presentation given above, I should also mention that one of the tasks for Norwegian special educational training is to organize a systematical post educational plan for those who have taken part one, part two

and also for those who have taken neither. A program for the post training project consisting of one week and simular courses is being developed at The Advanced College of Special Education. The first programs, especially those dealing with the areas autism, the problems of the deaf-blind and counselling pedagogic, have already taken place and aroused a great deal of interest. These courses will hopefully in future make it possible for most of those who work with children, young and elderly people in Norwegian schools, to receive the inspiration and concrete knowledge that a systematical post training project can give.

I will also mention that the first preparations are under way to develop systematical post training possibilities for those with Ph.D.-exam. (part three etc.) or similar qualifications in psychology etc. In other words to build up research development and thereby increase the qualifications of the staff as well as contributing in a constructive manner to the total knowledge in the large and difficult field of special education.

SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES AND PROBLEMS

Hopefully, it is evident from the description above that graduate and post graduate courses in special education in Norway are only available for those who are already qualified as teachers. This means that The Advanced College of Special Education does not accept students after they have taken what we in Norway call "examen artium" (this corresponds to A-levels). They must first have been on a three year teacher training or similar course and have experience as a teacher. (There are certain exceptions to this basic rule, but I will not examine these closer now.)

An important principle which is one of the reasons for this arrangement can be called "practical orientation". Both education and special education represent practical skills that must be judged by the results they lead to. We can understand by the phrase "practical orientation" an assertion of the importance of the external "practical validity" of the

theories one advocates. This evaluation thus makes it clear that the possibilities of an education in special-pedagogic without the prescribed requirements is hardly the present policy in Norway. It can also be underlined that both part one/part two of the courses are made up of a constructive division between practical-pedagogical experience and scientific/theoretical documentation and appraisal. They are of necessity "problemorientated", not because of a educational "fixed idea" as is often the case in academic-psychological courses. Also in the part three which consentrate upon scientific/research work, it has been seen that previous practical experience in peoples' everyday life, their suffering and hopes is a very meaning-full starting point. There is, however, a clear aim that the research must be practically orientated. The objective of the research is said to be practical/scientific. Thus that which has previously been called - in some derogatory tones - practical innovation work, and that which, in tones of praise, has been called academic educational research have now begun to approach one another in the part three course. The research work which has been completed by the first Ph.D.'s (third part) is of a relatively high standard. A few of the dissertations may earn some international recognition and will hopefully be published in an adequate way.

I wish to stress at the moment one finds oneself in the indicated confrontation between practical and academic values in a role which is a much more important than that of simply a "tactical go-between". The important matter here is to find ways to new knowledge, new understandings which ought to be of vital importance for the lives of the handicapped, where in many areas I think it is correct to say we are still crawling around in the dark of the middle ages.

An important principle in Norwegian school-policy and national policy during the past 10-20 years has gone under the heading of decentralization. This has influenced the area of special education, not least the decentralization that has taken place in graduate and post-graduate education.

Today we find almost 10 different teachers' training colleges and similar institutions involved in different ways preparing teachers for special education. There has also been a general decentralization with regards to the division of responsibility including also scientific research and work. The Advanced College of Special Education has established external stipend positions whereby highly skilled practising special educators can use half of their time as stipend-students at The Advanced College, to work upon research projects in the district where they are employed, is an example of this. In the guidelines for part three studies (Ph.D) it is stressed that these students preferably might carry out the scientific work in the district or at the institution to which they have previously been connected. An important part of the decentralization principles has further more a close connection with the ideas of integration that are found on the whole in Norwegian school policy.

We are here talking of giving as many children, young and elderly people as possible the opportunity to have teaching treatment etc. in their home environment. This desegregation train of thought can only be realized with the maximum mobilization of resources at a local level. This will mean that special education within near future has to be an integral part of every teachers basic training. At the moment, in Norway there is an intense debate about how these aims can be put forward.

Seen internationally, it is probably original that Norway has developed special education as an undivided independent subject. One has thus combined the responsibility for development and the actual graduate education in one centralized institution which also covers the whole special-educational field of work. In my opinion there are obvious advantages to be had from insuring that all the "specialists" have a sufficiently broad knowledge. At the same time it is important to point out that this structure does not hinder specialization. Specialization is actually a necessity in connection with both part two and part three. The main point is that one cannot specialize

without being able to document a certain broad knowledge of the special educational field of work. Further more this arrangement insures a common professional basis and will undoubtedly continue even though a few attempts have been made upon "dividing strategies". In the debate that has taken place between generalist- and specialist models one has often evaluated the importance of knowing "a lot about a little" versus knowing "a little about a lot" etc. What I can underline is that the aim of the model that is used at The Advanced College of Special Education is to attain the good sides of both the generalist and specialist models. But as we all know, there will always be a discrepancy between our aims and our everyday reality.

It is not possible to define any precise theoretical or a philosophical position for Norwegian special education. It is orientated towards the individual in so far as that it asserts that each individual should get as much help as possible, at the same time giving high priority to developing new means of early diagnostic. It is orientated towards institutions by giving importance to evaluating the relationship that children and the young meet in the institutions that have responsibility for them, i.e. first and foremost the family and the school. It is social- and macro-orientated by being active in critical analyzing social values and economic resource dispositions.

Critical empirical- and action research hold a strong position in Norwegian special education.

In short it can be said that special education in Norway is respected as a vocational and personality developing field of study within both the School- and Health System. The expectations of this subjects' opportunities can actually seem frightening large when one takes into account how little the potensial scientific possibilities have been developed, and one sees this in the relation to the enormous challenges every day life can present for handicapped children, young people, the elderly and their families.